



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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For More Information, Contact:
Diana Read
Injury/Violence Prevention Program
North Dakota Department of Health
Phone: 701.328.4536
E-mail: dread@nd.gov

Holiday Festivities can Pose a Risk for Accidental Poisonings

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health is offering some tips to prevent poisonings and to stay safe during the holidays.

People celebrate holidays in many different ways: traveling to visit family; hosting family and friends at home; decorating; and exchanging gifts. With the hustle and bustle, it's easy to forget about some of the basic safety precautions that can avoid a poisoning and keep everyone safe.

“As with any time of the year, knowing the risks and taking simple precautionary measures can prevent an accidental poisoning from happening during the holidays,” said Diana Read, Injury/Violence Prevention Program director for the North Dakota Department of Health. “Don’t let a poisoning spoil your holiday!”

Here are a few helpful hints as you enter into the festivities of the season:

- Be sure that handbags, suitcases, and visitors’ medicines are out of sight and reach of children. Medicines should be kept in a locked place such as a suitcase or another container with a lock. Give guests a safe place to lock up medicines.
- Remind visitors that children love to imitate adults. It's important to keep their medicines where children can't see or reach them. Ask them to take their medicines where children can't watch.
- Alcohol is a dangerous poison for children and pets. Watch closely to be sure that children don’t drink alcoholic beverages. Also, empty out glasses, cans and bottles before going to bed. The youngsters often will be awake the next morning before the adults! While you’re at it, clean up left-over food and cigarette butts, so they don’t end up in children’s mouths the next morning and cause food poisoning or nicotine poisoning.
- Decorate without live holly berries, mistletoe berries, or Christmas tree bubble lights. All are poisonous.
- If hot or cold food has been out for more than two hours, throw it away. Put other left-over food in the refrigerator. Look around the kitchen. Be sure that knives, openers and other sharp objects are out of children's reach.

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600 E. Boulevard Ave. Dept. 301, Bismarck, North Dakota 58505-0200
Phone: 701.328.2372 Fax: 701.328.4727 E-mail: health@nd.gov

Visit the health department home page at www.ndhealth.gov.

- Batteries in toys, greeting cards, electronic devices, flameless candles, and remote controls can cause serious injury if humans (or pets) swallow them. **Button batteries are easy for children to swallow and stuff up their noses or into their ears.** If someone swallows a battery, it usually goes right through the system without problems. Sometimes, though, the battery gets stuck before reaching the stomach in a fold of the intestines, or even in the appendix. If that happens, there can be internal damage, even severe bleeding. If a battery is put in the nose, it can damage the tissue within just a few hours. If a battery is put in the ear, it can damage the ear drum within just a few hours.
- **If you think there's been a poisoning, call the Poison Center right away at 1.800.222.1222.** When you call that number anywhere in the U.S., local Poison Center experts will answer the phone – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, holidays included.

For more information about poison prevention or to request stickers and magnets with the national poison control number, contact Diana Read, North Dakota Department of Health, at 800.472.2286 (press 1).

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